

UNIT-III

FESTIVALS DURING NAYAKS

The term festival denotes any act of rejoicing and uproar. Festivals are the oldest rituals and traditions our countrymen follow to pay tribute to the almighty gods and goddesses. Festival is also known as Utsava.¹ God, the Almighty performs five kinds of works namely Creation, Protection, Destruction, Concealment and Grace. These five works are shown in the ten days festivals of the temple. Bringing sand, sprouting and flag hoisting denotes the God's work of creation. Procession of deities, yagas and sacrifice denotes the work of protection and the car festival, pari vettai, santhanithal denotes the work of destruction. In fact, these celebrations are the symbols of peace and happiness.² India is a diverse country with multiple religions and cultures conglomerated in a single form. So our Festivals draw a unique picture for the world to follow a brilliant example of harmony. Festivals are much larger than almost any occasion. Festivals are events ordinarily staged by a local community, which centers on and celebrates some unique aspect of that community.³ Tamil Nadu is a land of festivals and culture. Festivals of Tamil Nadu have traditionally been preservers of the art and culture of the State, especially the festivals of Nayaks period are celebrated with great grandeur to highlight the temple art

1. B.Banerjee, ***Hindu Culture, Custom and Ceremony***, Delhi, 1979, p.193
2. A.V.Jeyechandran, ***Temples as Cultural Centres***, Mysore, 1990, p.224
3. S.V.Subramanian, K. D. Thirunavukkarasu (ed), ***Historical Heritage of the Tamils***, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Madras, 1983, p. 539.

of the region.⁴ Nayaks festivals besides establishing the architecture of the temple, also act as channel in the distribution of economic wealth throughout the region. We consider them the best part of the year and wait for them eagerly. General prosperity and a natural desire for association made the people to indulge leisurely pursuits like celebrations of festivals resulted in social gathering.⁵ People of all ages find their ways to enjoy with their families and worship the gods and goddesses. Every religious festival has a story behind it. These stories carry a message for all the common men. Most of the Festivals convey the message of peace and the victory of good over evil.⁶ Every family prepares delectable preparations and invites guests, relatives and other family members. Families reunite, people enjoy for a few days and then get back with their monotonous lives. They again wait for another year eagerly for the religious Festivals to arrive with the wish to see their loved ones again. These Festivals make India a single entity. It is the beauty of diversified unity that no other country can display.⁷ The Festivals are the social glues that keep different communities together despite the social differences and make India stronger. This is the legacy of our country that we have been carrying from one generation to the other for ages. On these occasions, we express our gratitude to God and remember the mythological event associated with a particular festival.⁸

4. M. P. Besbarvah (ed), ***Fairs and Festivals of India***, , New Delhi, 2003, p. 291.

5. Ibid., 295.

6. Raju Kalidos, ***Temple Cars of medieval Tamilham***, Tanjore,1989,p.223.

7. Manohar Devadoss, ***Enathu Madurai Ninaivugal***, Chennai,2010, p.211

8. P.V.Jagadisha Iyer, ***South India, Festivites***, Newdelhi,1989,p.135

Epigraphical evidences prove that festivals have been celebrated in India since Vedic times.⁹ The Aryans conquered India around 1500 B.C. and cultural integration with the local population took place. A large number of festivals being celebrated in India have a religious outlook. These festivals are being celebrated in commemoration of some saints, gurus and prophets, the gods and goddesses or events celebrating their victories.¹⁰ No festival in India is complete without a feast, and the Hindu temple provides feasts during the temple festivals. The attendees spend all day at the temple, enjoying themselves.¹¹ Fairs or Melas are extremely popular not just in India but all over the world. Mela serves a very important role as most of the festivals are celebrated in individual homes. Melas that are normally celebrated for a week to over a month help to bring the community together and share greetings.¹² There are different stages while celebrating the festivals. Anukgnai is the first stage of the festival is to obtain permission from the God and Goddess to perform the rituals by the priest and also to announce the devotees that the priest is eligible to perform the rituals. Then Lord Vigneswar (Lord Vinayaga) is worshipped to protect the ensuing festival from the entire obstacle.¹³ Vastu Santhi Pujas are performed to sanctify the festival, mantras and the place is called Vastu Santhi. It is performed to

9. M.Valarmathi. ***The Socio-Cultural Aspects, The Contribution of the Tamils to Indian Culture***, Vol. III, 1994, p.150.

10. Das. ***R.K Temples of Tamil Nadu***, Bombay, 1964.

11. Chitralekha Singh, Premnath, ***Hindu Festivals Fairs and Fasts***, New Delhi, 1999, p.163.

12. G. Sethuraman, ***Facets of Indian Art and Culture***, Madurai, 1995, p. 115.

13. Ibid., p.118

protect the festival from Vastu Purushan ,a demon or an Ashura who had got a boon of never ending life and to satisfy the Devas including Brahma.¹⁴ Miruthsangraha stage is meant for bringing sand. Pujas are conducted to the Goddess earth, the protective deities including Indira, and Ashtathik (eight directions) Balagars and Brahma, the chief to get permission from them and sand is brought.¹⁵ Angurarppanam means sprouting of grains. Grains are sprinkled with milk and sprouted in 12 pots. The healthy growth of these grains is the sign of the smooth functioning of the festival. Each day pujas are performed to these sprouted pots both morning and evening.¹⁶ Rakshabandan is tying of a yellow. A priest ties a thread, which is smeared by turmeric powder, in the wrist of his right hand to protect him till completing the festival without any hindrance. Idaba Velvi is a performance by which, the Nandhi (bull) in front of the Lord's sanctum sanctorum is worshipped for getting permission from Him. Pujas, Abhishekam and velvi or yaga are conducted to Nandhi Bagavan.¹⁷ Dhwajarohanam is a method by which on the first day of the festival after doing the above mentioned pujas, the flag hoisting ceremony is observed in the morning. A flag is brought on an elephant and kept in front of the Nandhi. Assuming Nandhi Bagavan is in the flag picture of Nandhi is drawn on the flag to represent all

14. A.K.Parantamanar, ***Thirumalai Nayakar Varalaru***, Chennai, 1973,p.123

15. Helen Cameron Gordon, ***Hindu Life and Customs***, New Delhi, 2000.p.142

16. R.Panchannatham Pillai, ***Madurai Arulmigu Meenakshi Sundareswarar ThirukkovilVaralaru***, , Madurai, 1988, p.70.

17. Chitralekha Singh, Premnath, ***Hindu Festivals Fairs and Fasts***, New Delhi, 1999, p.163.

the Devas and permission is sought from them to celebrate the festival.¹⁸ Upakara Puja with 16 types of lamps and recitation of Thirumurai hymns are performed under the dhwaja stump (flag staff) and flag is hoisted in an auspicious time. Berithadanam or Thudikottal is a method by which Suthu Mathalam and Birma Thalam ,a kind of musical instruments are kept in front of the flag staff and the priest himself beats the instrument to make known the inauguration of the festival. The deities of eight directions are worshipped in the procession at night. This is called as Dhiku Bandanam. It depicts that worshipping these deities to conduct the festival in a well manner.¹⁹ Velvi or Fire sacrifice is performed at the yaga sala (fire sacrifice hall) on the second day of the festival. Thiru Ula is a method by which the utsava deities are taken in procession in and out of the temple walls during the festival days. The philosophy behind the procession of the utsava deity is to safeguard the whole world and to bless the people without discriminating as illiterate, indiscipline, disabled etc.²⁰ Sakthi Oodal is another performance in which Lord Siva got the help of Lord Vishnu instead of Goddess Parvathi (sakthi) to disguise as 'Mohini' to subdue the sage of Tharuga forest. So Sakthi got Oodal playful anger with Lord Siva. This incident is performed during the temple festival in Madurai.²¹ Samanar Kazhuvetram is a performance by which the incident of 'Thirugnana Sambandar defeating the Jains through debate' is enacted at this stage and

18. A.R.E., No.401 of 1929-1930

19. A.R.E., No.401 of 1929-1930.

20. M.Thangavel Desikar, "**Maduraikkoil Aparanankal**", *Madurai Temple Complex Kumbabhisekha Souvenir, Op.cit.*, p.290.

21. T.Kodandaramaiah, "**Vasantotsava in Madurai**", *Madurai Temple Complex Kumbabisheka Souvenir, Op.cit.*, p.102.

it is called as Samanar (Jains) Kazhuvetram. Pari Vettai is also called as ‘Miruka Yatirai’ (traveling of animal). The literal meaning of Pari Vettai is Pari – horse, Vettai – hunting. But philosophically it means that the Utsava is performed requesting Lord Siva to subdue the animal like qualities of man such as arrogance, adamant etc.²² Soorna Utsavam is a ritual is performed to send off all devas as a sign of the ending of the festival. Avarohanam is a performance by which the flag is lowered down on the last day of the festival at night. On this day ‘Mouna bali’ (silent sacrifice) is performed and it is also called as Mouna Utsavam. Thirthavari is a performance by which the festival is ended with a Thirthavari i.e a bath in the holy water source. The Utsava deities are bathed by holy water which denotes the end of the festival. As such different methods are performed to celebrate the festivals in a grand manner.²³

Festivals can be grouped as universal and local festivals. The local festivals are mostly celebrated monthly and annually. The festivals of a temple are classified into Masotsava (monthly festivals) and Samvatsarotsava (annual festival). Routine festivals are celebrated in every month. During the festivals, folk songs are sung in groups, some by men, some by women folk and a few by both together.²⁴ In addition there will be performances by professional artists, which are in the nature of ballads and folk dances such as Karagam, Kavadi and Poikkal kuthirai (dummy horse). They are performed either solo or in groups.²⁵ In the Vaishnavite temples,

22. **Annual Reports of Epigraphy** 693 of 1904;

23. **Annual Reports of Epigraphy** 38 of 1908.

24. Chandra Sekaran, T. (ed.), **South Indian Temple Inscriptions**, Vol II, Oriental Inscription Series, Madras, 1904.

25. Ibid P.110

Divya Prabandam (Pasurams of Alvars) are recited and group reciting the same lead the procession. In the Saivite temples the Vedic scholars and the odhuvar (reciters of the Tamil hymns) follow the Lord. Religious celebrations were praised to check the aggregate love of the general population who uncovered their appearance of eternality in changed ways. The basic sublimation of gathering of individuals assembled in an event was called celebrations.²⁶ Typically, celebrations bring solidarity, peace and congruity alongside monetary appropriation of wealth. All the Temple celebrations begin with hail raising in the early morning with exceptional pujas.²⁷ Amid celebration, the parade of gods was organized on the fundamental avenues of the Temples called Thiruveethi Ula. The divinities were enriched and were taken in various vahanas in every day of the celebration, keeping in mind the end goal to offer darshan to everyone of the general population who were incapacitated or not permitted to the Temples sanatorium. Ordinarily, rodent for Lord Ganesa, peacock for Lord Muruga, Karuda for Lord Vishnu, Risaba for Lord Shiva and Kamathenu to Goddess Sakthi were designated on the premise of the Puranic texts.²⁸ Amid celebrations, the gods were enriched with valuable gems, adornments and garments, with divine loves and with a regal look as though they lead over the brains of the general population with happiness and reverence.²⁹ Amid the Temple celebrations a few scenes in Puranas are displayed. For instance at Thiruchendur, amid

26. A.K.Paranthamanar, ***Thirumalai NaickarVaralaru***, Op.cit., p.424.

27. Ibid. p.453.

28. Paramasivan, ***Theivankalum, SamugaMarapukalum*** (Tamil), Madras, 1995, p.201.

29. T. Paramasivam, ***Alagarkoil*** (Tamil), Op.cit., p.28.

the Kandasasti celebration, the scene of Lord Muruga killing the Asura is portrayed to the fans who amass there on that day. Moreover at Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, the scene of goddess Sakthi killing the Asura is portrayed, amid the Navarathiri celebration in the period of October each year.³⁰ In this way for all intents and purposes in each one of the long extends of a year, festivities were adulated in all the conspicuous Temples of the Nayak Kingdom.³¹ The Hindu festivals are designed by the great sages of old. They were full of wisdom and capable of understanding and utilizing the forces of nature in the universe. They understood thoroughly human nature and human wants. They also knew the dangers of humanity, susceptible to form super-physical forces and intelligences. They were responsible for the origin of temples, festivals, vrathas, fasts and so fourth with definite aims in South India. Each and every festivals has a deep spiritual significance, and persons capable of taking the short cut to spiritual progress may advanced very rapidly, if they only understand the principle underlying the observance, and take to it in the right manner and in the right spirit.³² At present festivals are being conducted in the temple in almost all the months of the year. The main festivals are masi festival, in vaikasi and karthigai deepam, etc. These festivals attract always huge crowds from nearby villages.³³ During the festival days, the deities are being decorated with

30. R.Ganapathy, ***Navarathiri Nayaki***, (Tamil), Madurai, 1987, p.132.

31. K.Gowri, “***Madurai Site and Situation***”, Madurai Temple Complex Kumbabisheka Souvenir, Madurai, 1974, p.81.

32. P.V.Jagadisa Ayyar, ***South Indian Shrines***, New Delhi, 1982, p.192.

33. A.V.Jeyechandrun, “***Madurai Temple Complex***”, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 1985, p.219.

costly jewels and fresh flowers and they are taken round the enclosure and then through the car streets on the months suited to the occasion. A number of wooden vahanas are used to mount the god during the festival days.³⁴

Chithirai Festival

Chithirai month has its own claim for prominence in the Madurai Temple and the ending of that festival in a Tirthavari on Chitra pournami at Potramaraikkulam for it was on that day that Indiran worshipped Sundareswarar and founded the Madurai Temple by installing the Indira vimanaborne by eight elephants. The festival starts one or two days after the new moon day in the month of Chithirai. On the first day the flag hoisting ceremony is performed. Nandhi (Rishaba), Thrisulam (Trident), Suryan (sun) and Chandran (moon) are drawn on the white flag. It is taken as procession on an elephant around the Aadi Street and a priest hoists the flag and takes a pledge to follow the agama rules during the festival. From the day of flag hoisting to lowering down people will not go out of city.³⁵ Pujas are performed with suttu matthalam and birma thalam under the flag staff and a priest plays these instruments himself. The priest, who has tied the Raksha bandanam performs pujas in yaga sala both in morning and evening, comes around the Aadi Street and conduct the Enthisai (eight directions) ritual before the procession of Gods. Each day deities are taken on procession in different Vahanas (vehicles).³⁶ On the first day both Lord

34. A.V.Jeyechandrun, “**Madurai Temple Complex**”, Madurai, 1985, p.219.

35. Ibid., p. 220.

36. T.Kodandaramaiah, “**Vasantotsava in Madurai**”, Op.cit., p.178.

Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken on the Simmasanam (Throne) and go to kulalar mandapam inside the temple in the morning and around the Masi Street in the evening. Lord Sundareswarar comes in Karpaga Viruksham Vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Simha Vahana which are mounted on decorated motorized carts. On the second day, the procession starts at about 7.30 am goes around the Masi Streets taking both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in golden car and reaches Muthuramaiyar Mandapam inside the temple. At night about 7.00 pm Lord Sundareswarar comes in Bhootha Vahana and Goddess Meenakshi comes in Anna (swan) vahana around the Masi Streets and reaches the temple.³⁷ On the third day, the procession starts at about 7.30 am, goes around the Masi Streets taking both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in golden car and reaches Kalyana Sundara Mudhaliyar mandapam inside the temple. At night about 7.00 pm Lord Sundareswarar comes in Kailasa Parvatham Vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Kamadhenu Vahana around the Masi Streets and reaches the temple. On the fourth day morning at about 9.00 am both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in golden palanquine through Therku Vassal (South Gate) to Villapuram pavakkai mandapam. There Divya Deeparathanai is performed.³⁸ In the evening the procession starts from there comes through Therku Vasal, Chinnakadai Street, around the Chithirai Streets and reach the temple in the golden palanquin. On the fifth day morning at about 8.00 am Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi

37. T.Kodandaramaiah, “**Vasantotsava in Madurai**”, Op.cit., p.178.

38. T.Paramasivan, **Alagarkoil**, Op.cit., p.45.

come in golden car around the Masi Streets and reach Ramayana Chavadimandapam in North Masi Street. In the evening Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi come in separate kuthirai (horse) vahana to North Masi Street and reach Meenakshi Nayakkar mandapam inside the temple. There 'Vedar Pari Leelai', a divine sport is enacted. On the Sixth day morning at about 7.30 am, the procession of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi is taken place around the Masi Street in golden chariot and reach to Sivagangai Raja mandapam inside the temple then at about 7.00pm the procession of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi go around Masi Street each in separate Rishaba Vahana and return to the temple.³⁹ In the evening at 6.00 pm in Yanai Mahal a temple Othuvar tells the story of Thirugnana Sambandars' establishment of the Saivite religion. On the seventh day, in the morning at 8.00 am Lord Gangalanathar alone is taken in Simhasanam Vahana around the Masi Streets the images of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken to Meenakshi Nayakar mandapam inside the temple at about 12 noon. In the evening at 7.00 pm Lord Sundareswarar in Nandhikeswarar vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Yali vahanacome around the Masi Streets and reach Thiru Rasu Pandaram sons' 'Pushpa Singara Thirukkan' in Ashta Sakthi mandapam. There a pair of Soda Sobasara Deeparathanai is shown to the deities and then return inside the temple.⁴⁰ On the eighth day morning at about 10.00 am the procession of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in golden Palanquin goes through East Chithirai Street,

39. S.S.Janaki, ***Siva Temples and Temple Rituals***, Madras, 1988, p.64.

40. S.Vaithyalingam, ***Tamilaka Kavin Kalai Matchi, (Tamil)***, Madras, 1980, p.73.

South Chithirai Street and reach Thirugnana Sambanadar Swamigal Aatheenam Kattu Chetti mandapa padi at West Masi Street and stay there till 3.00 pm. Then they return to the temple through the same way. In the morning the divine sport of ‘Sakthi Udal’ is enacted.⁴¹ In the evening, Pattabishekam for Goddess Meenakshi is performed in six pillared mandapa at Goddess Meenakshishrine. She wears a crown and garland made of neem flowers as a sign of Pandya Princess and scepter is given in Her hand. Then the Chairman of Trust Board receives the scepter from Goddess Meenakshi and with all honour from Meenakshishrine, he goes around the second prahara of Sundareswarar shrine and return to the Meenakshi shrine and gives the scepter to Goddess Meenakshi. Then at about 8.00 pm the procession of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in Velli Simhasanam (silver throne) is taken place around the Masi Streets and return to the temple. On the ninth day at 8.00 am the procession of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in Maravarna Chapparam (colourful wooden car) goes around the Masi Streets and reach Shivagnangai Raja mandahapadi inside the temple. Then at about 6.00 pm Meenakshi Amman’s Digvijayam is performed. Goddess Meenakshi is taken in Indira Vimana Vahana to Lala Sri Renga Chattiram Thirukkan mandapam at the juncture of North and East Masi Streets.⁴² On the tenth day, the celestial wedding of the Pandya Princess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar is celebrated. The major highlight of the Chithirai Brahmotsavam festival is the

41. R.Panchannatham Pillai, ***Madurai Arulmigu Meenakshi Sundareswarar ThirukkovilVaralaru***, Madurai, 1988, p.70.

42. Ibid., p.84

'Meenakshi Thirukalyanam' or celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar on the tenth day of the festival. The celebration starts with Vigneswara Puja and Brahma homam. The Mangalya Puja is performed. Lord Subramanya Swami and Lord Pavalakkanivai Perumal come from Thirupparamkundram to attend the celestial wedding. Lord Muruga of Thirupparankundram, as king Ukrapandya washes the feet of his parents and holy thread (kappu) is tied in the hands of Lord Sundareswarar, Priyavidai Amman and Meenakshi.⁴³ A priest from Kulasekara Bhattar family assumes as bride groom and another from Vikrama Pandya Bhattar family as bride perform the garland exchanging ceremony and the Hindu marriage rituals are performed like coming around the fire pit, sprinkling fried rice and stamping on Ammi (a stone used for grinding). The women devotees also tie the turmeric dipped holy thread (thali) around their neck. Turmeric, the holy thread, viboothi, kumkum are distributed to the devotees as prasadham. Devotees give money as marriage gift (moi) after taking the marriage feast.⁴⁴ On the eleventh day Therottam or car festival is celebrated. Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi come to Theradi mandapam. Two separate cars (thers) kept in Theradi mandapam are decorated elegantly. Pujas are performed to these Cars and Lord Sundareswarar is seated in a Car and Goddess Meenakshi is seated in another one. In front of

43. Breckenridge-Appadurai C., ***The Sri Minaksi Sundaresvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India***, PHD Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976.

44. Valayapettai, Ra. Krishnan, ***The Great Temple of Madurai MeenakshiArulmiguMeenakshiSundareswarar Temple***, Madurai, 2014, p.45.

these two cars Lord Vinayaga and Lord Murugan come in two smaller wooden cars.⁴⁵ Priests perform Pujas and Deeparathani and when the Chairman of the trust board wave the white flag, the V.I.Ps and other officials and devotees pull the rope of the cars and Therottam is held. The procession goes around the four Masi Streets and reaches the Theradi mandapam in East Masi Street. Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are tied parivattam (a white silk cloth around the head) during the procession and at the end both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are crowned. A person from Ramnad Samasthanam is getting the first honour at this time. Then the God and Goddess return to the temple.⁴⁶ In the evening the trust board members, religious endowment members, Government officials, police personals and VIPs are honored by tying Parivattam. At night both the deities of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in a 'Sapta VarnaChapparam' around the four Masi Streets. Thirupparankundram Lord Murugar comes in Peacock (Mayil) Vahana.⁴⁷ On the twelfth day a divine sport of 'Indira absolved of his sin' is performed in the golden Lilly tank, at the Uchikala Puja. He performs Devendra Puja with white lotus flowers and gets rid of his sin. This is called as Thirthavari. At night Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in Idaba Vahana around the four Masi Streets and reach 16 pillared mandapa. There they give send off to Lord Subramanya Swami and Pavalkkanivai Perumal.⁴⁸ Then the flag lowering ceremony is held and with

45. Annual Report on Epigraphy, Archaeological Department, for the Years, 1891 To 1968, Madras.

46. Madras Epigraphist's Reports.

47. Thenninthiya Kovil Sasanankal (Tamil), Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

48. South Indian Inscriptions, Volume IX, (ed.) Sharma Sastry, Delhi, 1941.

this the Chithirai festival comes to an end. Each day of this festival, during the procession crackers are exploded; musical instruments like Nathaswaram and Pancha Vathyam are played; camel, elephant, umbrella, surutti, theevatti (a fire torch) proceed in front of the cars; and Vedas are recited by Shivacharyars and Thevaram hymns are recited by Othuvars.⁴⁹

One of the highlights of the Chithirai Festival is the procession of Lord Kallazhagar or Lord Vishnu, the brother of Goddess Meenakshi, who proceeds from Azhagarmalai to Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple to give away his sister in marriage to Lord Sundareswarar. The procession of Lord Kallazhagar on gleaming golden horse chariot starts from Azhagar Hills, about 30 km from Madurai. Due to a divine play, he was tricked by God Indra and delayed on the way. Mean while, the marriage was presided over by a local counter part koodal Azhaghar. This act angered Lord Vishnu and He returns to Azhagar koil without visiting Madurai. The Kaalazhagar's entry into river Vaigai is a beautiful sight to witness.⁵⁰

Tamil New Year

During the middle of April, it is an important festival of the people. The sun rises from the 1st constellation Aries on this day. The people worship their family deity and visit temples. Huge devotees visit all important temples on this day. This month is called “chittirai” and in olden days on the full moon day of this month, a great festival was celebrated called indravizha or vasanthavizha. Special poojas, anandhanam, religious discourses and

49. Kumara Guruparar, ***Madurai Meenakshiammai Pillai Tamil***, Madras, 1950.P.145

50. Ibid., p.176

cultural programmes are conducted in all the temples. The temples are illuminated and decorated with plantain tree and mango leaves. It was one among the important festival conducted in this month.⁵¹

Vaikasi

The other important festival of this temple is Thirukalyanam in the month of Vaikasi (May-June). This festival is being celebrated for ten days and said to be one of great importance.

Vaikasi Visakam

Vaikasi Visakam is observed as the Sacred Astrims Visakam of Subramaniya, the son of Lord Siva. It is celebrated in the month of Vaikasi (May-June) on the full moon day at all Siva temple. On that day, in the morning special Abhishekam, Alankaram and special neivedhya are offered to Kantha (Muruga) and his consorts Valli and Deivayanai. Gingelly oil, milk, curd, turmeric powder, sandal, pannir, panchamirtham, honey, ash and fruits are used for the purpose of Abishekam.⁵² On the day, devotees of Lord Muruga fasting and go to the temples for worship at early in the morning. The very same type of ritual is conducted in Sri Subramanya Swamy temple, Thiruparankundram.

Vaikasi Peruvila

The Vaikasi Peruvila is conducted only in the Amman temple like the Sri Mariamman temple festival conducted for 10 days. This, festivals is conducted in the month of Vaikasi. On that day Amman is cleaned with

51. Policy Note 2015-2016, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment

Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 2015, p.137.

52. S.M.L.Lakshmanan Chettiar, ***Folk Lore of Tamil Nadu***, New Delhi, 1983, p.98.

gingelly oil, water, tender coconut and rose water. Next new silk sarees, Ornaments, garlands flowers fruits and annam are offered after the special abishekam, alankaram and aradhana. This, festival ends with the karpura arathi.⁵³

Ani Thirumanjanam

The Thirumanjanam festival is conducted during the Tamil month Ani. It is celebrated in honor of lord Nataraja in all Siva temples. It is conducted for one day in the Tamil month of Ani(June-July) on the Uthiranachatiram. On that day in the morning special abishekam and special Pujas are performed.⁵⁴

Unjal Utsavam

This festival is celebrated for ten days in the month of Ani (June-July) from Magam to Mula Natchtram (star). It is celebrated in the 100 pillared mandapa inside the temple by Lala Chatra family members. All the 10 days both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in wooden Simhasana around the second prahara of Lord Sundareswarar shrine and reaches the 100 pillared mandapa and had no procession in the outer streets. On the tenth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar comes in golden horse vahana and Goddess Meenakshi comes in Simha vahana around Chithirai streets. During this festival the deities of both Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar are brought to Unjal Mandapa and placed on the swing, kept there when the unjal is swung, Pon Unjal songs written by Manikkavasakar are sung daily and the devotees worship the God here

53. T.V.Mahalingam, Op.cit., p.243.

54. K.K.Pillay, **Social History of the Tamils**, Madras, 1974, p.48.

The Uttara Nakshatra Utsavam is also performed in this month.⁵⁵ Abishekais performed for Lord Natarajar and Shivagami Amman in the early morning and the Utsava deities of Pancha Sabha (five courts) Natarajar and Velliambala (silver shrine) Natarajar are taken on procession around four Masi Streets.

Adi

Adi thiruvila is conducted only in the Amman temples, during the Tamil month Adi. The devotees are offered some types of koolu(gruel) of ragi, or maize in every Tuesday and Friday. The purpose is to gain and rain. During this month special abisheka, alankaras and arathanas are offered to Goddess. Aadi Varalakshmi fasting Performed in Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple, Madurai.

Adipuram

Aadipuram festival is celebrated to commemorate the penance performed by goddess Meenakshi. It is believed that Siva appeared before her the full moon day.⁵⁶ It is celebrated in the Tamil month of Adi (July- August).The myth has it that the goddess of the universe took birth in human form on the Adi-puram day.Periyalvar, the Vaishnava saint of Srivalliputtur was childless and prayed goddess Lakshmi for child. When he was ploughing his

55. M.Valarmathi. ***The Socio-Cultural Aspects, The Contribution of the Tamils To Indian Culture***, Vol. III, 1994, p.150.

56. The full moon is the lunar phase when the Moon appears fully illuminated From Earth's perspective. This occurs when Earth is located between the Sun and the Moon. This means that the lunar hemisphere facing Earth the near side is completely sunlit and appears as an approximately circular disk. The full moon occurs roughly once a month.

plough-share excavated a beautiful female child with divine radiance. She was named as Andal. It is believed that Periyalvar found the child Aandal on the day of Adi-puram. The Adi-puram festival is celebrated in the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, Sri Mariamman Temple for 10 days to commemorate the penance performed for female goddesses. It is said that Siva appeared before her on next day Aadi-perukku. On the last day Ustava Amman is placed in a palanquin and is taken in procession along the streets accompanied by music. Special pujas are performed to Aandal on this day in the Perumal temple.⁵⁷

Mulaikkottu Festival

From Ayilya Nakshatra to Kettai Nakshatra in the month of Aadi (July-August), the Mulaikkottu festival is celebrated for ten days. This festival is only for Goddess Meenakshi. The farmers start their cultivation only after this festival. The Utsava deity of Goddess Meenakshi is kept in the Kilikoondu mandapam and worshipped for all the ten days. The deities are taken to various mandapas inside the temple and return to Kilikoondu mandapam. The details of each day celebration are given in the following table. The first day is the flag hoisting ceremony. At about 8.00 am the flag is hoisted on the flag staff in front of the Meenakshishrine. On this day, 9 types of pulses mixed with milk are sprouted in pots. The deity of Goddess Meenakshi is kept on Simmasanam (Throne) in Kilikoondu mandapam and pujas are performed. At night the deities are taken on procession in Simha

57. M.Valarmathi.Op.Cit., p.150.

Vahana around the four Aadi Streets and return to Kilikoondu mandapam.⁵⁸ The first day is called as Kalyana (marriage) Utsava. On the second daymorning, both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken on procession in Simha Vahana and evening in Velli Anna (Silver Swan) Vahana around the four Aadi Streets. On the Third day morning the God and Goddess come in Thanga Chapparam (a small golden car) and evening in Kamadhenu Vahana around the four Adi streets. In the noon time at Pooram star, salt, paddy and rice are filled in three measuring instruments (Nazhi) and both Mulava and Utsava deities of Goddess Meenakshi are performed 'Dhrishti Kazhithal'⁵⁹ (A custom followed by the Hindus to remove the envious look) On the fourth day morning Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi come in Thanga Chapparam and evening in Silver Elephant (Velli Yaanai)Vahana around the Aadi Streets and return to Kilikoondu mandapam. On the fifth day morning, after performing pujas they are taken in Thanga Chapparam from Thirukkalyana mandapam. In

58. Kilikoondu Mandapam, also called Sangili mandapam , is near the Meenakshi shrine. The word Kilikondu means "parrot cage", and in past the parrots kept here were trained to say "Meenakshi". This pillared hall was completed in 1623 by Muthu Veerappa Nayakar. The cages were later removed. In contemporary times, girls perform the kolattam dance, a type of stick dance that involves acrobatics and forming chains with long ropes hanging from the ceiling, which is why it is called sangili. These dances celebrate Hindu festival days. The Kilikoondu Mandapam is notable for its sculpture of characters from the Mahabharata, a Hindu epic. It also has a yali sculpture on a pillar, inside whose mouth is carved a stone ball that freely rotates.

59. P.V.Jegadesa Ayyar, **South Indian Customs**, Madras, 1906, p.148

the evening they are taken in Idaba Vahana around the four Aadi streets. On the sixth day morning, the deities are brought in Thanga Chapparam to Thiruvalluvar Kazhaka mandapam in the North Aadi Street and pujas are performed. Then the procession comes around the Aadi Streets and reaches the Kilikoondu mandapam. At night, the deities are taken in parrot (Kili) Vahana to Hindu Virudhunagar Nadar's mandapam in the North Aadi Street. After doing pujas the procession goes around the four Aadi Streets and reaches the Kilikoondu mandapam.⁶⁰ On the seventh day morning, in Swati Nakshatra, the deities of Sundaramoorthy Nayanar and Seraman Perumal Nayanar are taken in Silver Elephant and Horse Vahana respectively from Avani Mula Street and reach the Kilikoondu mandapam. At night, the deity Goddess Meenakshi is taken in floral palanquin(Poopallakkku)around the four Aadi Streets and returns to Kilikoondu mandapam. Then the deity is taken to the Utsavar shrine of the Sundareswarar shrine at the second Prahara and 'exchanging of garland' is held. On the eighth day morning, the deities are taken in Thanga Chapparam from Thirukkalyana mandapam around the four Aadi Streets and reach the Kilikoondu mandapam. At night, the deities are taken to Sooravali Suppaiyar mandapam. Pujas are performed there. Then the procession goes around the four Aadi Streets and reaches the Kilikoondu mandapam. On the ninth day morning, the deities are taken in Chattather (a small wooden car) to Meenakshi Nayakkar mandapam. After performing pujas the procession goes around the four Aadi Streets and returns to Kilikoondu mandapm. At night from Meenakshi Nayakkar mandapam the

60. M.Valarmathi.Op.Cit., p.120.

procession starts on 'Poochapparam' (a small car decorated with flowers) and goes around the four Aadi Streets and returns to the temple. On the tenth day morning the deities are taken on Thanga Chapparam around the four Aadi Streets. At night they are taken on Kanaka Thandiyal Vahana around the Aadi Streets and return to the Kilikoondu mandapam. On this day the grown pulses, which were sprouted on the first day, are put into the water in Golden lotus tank. Then Thirthavari is performed. The Aadi Mulai Kottu festival is ended by lowering the flag.⁶¹

Avani

The religious day of Avani moolam falls in the month of Avani corresponding to the English month August-September. This month and especially this day is said to be under the influence of the asterism moolam and its presiding deity is an Asura named Nirrithi. In this temple this festival is celebrated on a small scale. In the same month, another festival is also being conducted which is called Vinayaka Chaturti on that day special pujas are conducted to Vinayaka. The statue of Ganesa is taken on a grand procession, round the prakara on the vahana mouse. This Hindu ceremony is of perennial interest to the Hindus all over India.⁶²

Vinayakar Chathurti

Vinayakar Chaturti is the most important festival celebrated by Hindus and throughout India. It is observed on the fourth day in the bright fortnight of the Tamil month Avani (August-September). During that occasion Vinayakar is taken in a car all over the city streets. Devotees offer the puffed rice and

61. P.V.Jegadesa Ayyar, ***South Indian Customs***, Madras, 1906, p.148.

62. S.Sankaranarayanan, ***The Vishnu Kunndis and Their Times***, Delhi, 1977, p.91.

kolukattai, flattened rice. It is a two-day function. The second day the Vinayaka statue is dipped in the river. This function is celebrated in the Tamil month of Avani. It is celebrated in Sri Mukkuruni Vinayakar at Madurai Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, Madurai. On that day, in the morning Lord Vinayakar is consecrated with gingelly oil, milk, curd, turmeric powder, tender coconut water, honey, fruits, sandal, pannier and ash. He is decorated with dress sandal and garland. Karupura arathi is shown to him. Sweet pongal is the special neivedhya. Appam, kolukattai and fruits are offered to the deity. After this ritual prasadams are distributed to the devotees.⁶³

Puttu Thiruvila:

Thirumalairayar Padithurai Veethi is where puttu thiruvila (one of the celebrations of Meenakshi Temple was resuscitated by King Thirumalai Nayak) was praised each year on the banks of stream Vaigai. Tamukkam salai is a road prompting a place called Tamukkam where Thirumalai Nayak had military beguilement's with fighters and wild animals.⁶⁴ Now this place is used for leading show, fairs and capacities. Another road near Mahal is called Pathu thun sandhu where ten colossal and monstrous mainstays of the remainder castle are standing there.

Purattasi

'Navarathiri' or the holy nine nights is a period of festivity being observed by the Hindus of India. In the Mariamman temple, after Sunset, in the moth of

63. **Thirumalainayakkar Cheppedukal** (Tamil), (eds.) N. Kasinathan, S. Rajagopal and V. Vedachalam, State Department of Archaeology, Madras, 1994.

64. Ibid., p.13.

Purattasi, corresponding to the English month September - October, this festival commences on the next day after the new moon day of the month every year. The object or aim with which it is being observed is said to be to propitiate the goddess, symbolizing every possible kind of energy in the universe, with a view to obtain perpetual happiness and prosperity, special pujas and abishekha are offered to goddess Durga. The special features of the festival, is that, the people throw arrows to kill asura. This kind of formal practices are going on in the festival of every year.⁶⁵

Bramotsavam

It is celebrated in the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple Suriya Valipadu in the month of Avani. The first festival starts in the morning special worship is offered to Kalamega perumal temple, Thirumokur, and Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple .Then he is decorated with cotton dress and offered fruits, tulsi, kum-kum and jadari (feet of perumal). Every morning Perumal receives special abishekam and alankaram.⁶⁶

Navarathri

Navarathri festival is celebrated to propitiate the goddess of universe to obtain happiness and prosperity. It is believed that goddess assumed a diabolical form and killed the asuras and came to this earth on a Navami day. This festival is also known as Dasara festival. Lakshmi, Sarasvati and Durga who confer wealth knowledge and health are worshipped as Iccha,

65. P.V.Jegadesa Ayyar, op.cit.,, p.148.

66. M.P.Bezbaruah, (Ed.), ***Festivals of India***, *Op.cit.*, p.353.

Kriya, and Gnana saktias. The first three days are devoted to Durga or Parvati, goddess of valour. The next three days are to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and the last three days are to Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. Navarathiri, the festival of nine nights, falls in the Tamil month of Puratasi (September- October) and goes on for 10 days i.e. Vijayadasami day. The ninth day is celebrated as Sarasvati puja. It is known as Dasara in the north and Durga puja (worship of tools and crafts), reflecting the progress of the country in the industrial field.⁶⁷

Vijayadasami

The 10th day of the festival is called Vijayadasami the day of victory. It is said that on that day Durga secured victory over the forces of ignorance symbolically portrayed i.e. Mahishasura, the buffalo headed demon. This, day is considered auspicious for education and children are admitted in school. In Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple during Navarathiri festival Kolumnapas or mahamandapas of temples are decorated. Everyday different aspects of gods and goddesses are depicted on the mandapa. During those days, all three Mother goddesses are adored. The first three days are devoted to goddess Durga or Parvati, the next three days to goddess Lakshmi and the three days to goddess Sarasvati. Mariamman is decorated and placed in a swing(unjal) in the mahamandapa. It is the custom of the temple that the idol of Amman is not out of the shrine except on the Navarathiri days. The Navarathiri festival is celebrated at the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple, Sri Subramanya Swamy temple,

67. V.S.Shaji, ***Religions of India – A Multi Dimensional Study***, New Delhi, 2010, p.84.

Thirupparankundram, Alagar Temple, Alagarkoil and Sri Mariamman Temple, Theppakulam. A number of festivals are celebrated to the glory of Sakti, the energy of the supreme being. The main purpose of celebrating this festival is to offer worship to malaimakal (daughter of the mountain) who is the kiriya sakthi and to kalai makal (daughter of wisdom) which is gnanasakthi. Icha, kriya and gnana sakthis are important aspects of sakthi. On the day, divine worship is performed to Goddess on the kolumandapa in both Siva and Vishnu temples. Every day special beautification is done to the Goddess with various Alankarams. It is different from one and another. Next to Saraswathi Puja, Vijaya Dasami, the day of victory is celebrated, Sakthi as Durga secured a victory over the forces of ignorance symbolically portrayed as the Mahisahsura, the buffalo-headed demon. Hence, she is called Mahisasura-Mardini.⁶⁸

Iyppasi Deepawali

Deepawali which means a row of lights. This day is dedicated to the Goddesses Lakshmi and Parvati. People celebrate this auspicious day with different types of fireworks and crackers to celebrate the death of Narogasura. It is celebrated by the Hindu people of Madurai. They wear new cloth and goes to temple for special prayer. The Muslim and Christian friends are invited for the feast.⁶⁹

Kantha Sasti

Kantha Sasti festival is arranged to commemorate the victory of Kantha over Surapadma, a demon king and his followers(surasamhara). The mythical

68. Hari Rao, V.N. (ed.), **Koil Olugu**, , Madras, 1961, p.135

69. Banerjee, B.N., **Hindu Culture, Customs and Ceremony**, Delhi, 1979, p.123

legend is that when Siva seated with Goddess Parvati, the Devas approached to rescue them from the harassment of the asura surapadma and his followers.⁷⁰ On hearing this, six divine sparks emanated from his third eye in the forehead. They glided into the Sravana Tank, in the form of six just born babies. Six celestial of the Kartika reared the six babies and Parvati joined them together and named the baby kantha with six faces. He received the Gana Sakti spear from Parvati with the spear, Kantha is said to have split the demon into two, one part of it turned into cock and that was absorbed as his emblem in the banner and the other which turned into peacock was used as his mount. All Siva temples and Murugan temples celebrate the kantha sasti festival on the 6th day of the bright fort night. In the Tamil month of Aippasi(October-November) the devotees of Muruga observe fasting for six days and spend the days in singing. His praise, reading hymns and puranas depicting his glory and worshipping him. ⁷¹ Skantha sasti commemorates the valiant act of Skantha or Muruga who annihilated the proud demon Surapadma who was challenging the devas and even the gods. Skantha sasti festival is celebrated in the Thirupparankundram Sri Subramanya Swamy Temple, Meenakshi Sundareswarer Temple in a grand manner. On the 6th day war between Subramanya and Surapadma are taken in procession through all the main streets and the war between them is demonstrated in the corners of the street and in front of the temple.⁷² Every year, like the celestial wedding of

70. Natarajan, N., ***Festivals and Cultures of the Tamil***, Tirunelveli, 1984.p.79

71. Ibid., p.86

72. Palaniappan, K., ***The Great Temple of Madurai***, Madurai, 1970.p.223

god Chokkanathar and goddess Meenakshi is being conducted. Surasamharam is also demonstrated almost in all Muruga temples. In Arupadai temples of Muruga, the Surasamharam festival is celebrated in a very grand style attracting lakhs of people at each temple. The Kantha Sasti Tirunal is conducted Sri Meenakshi Amman temple, Subramanya Swamy temple, Thirupparankundram. It is also celebrated in Palani and Thiruchendur. Kanthasasti Tirunal is the favorite day for Lord Muruga and is celebrated for six days. On the first day kappu kattu vila for Lord Muruga, Valli and Deivayanai is arranged at the Pirathanai thiti. In the evening coming after the new moon day in the month of Aiypasi. During the first day celebration Lord Muruga is sanctified with Abishekam and beautified with Santhana Kappu Alangaram.⁷³ On all five days at night, Muruga is accompanied with Valli and Deivayani goes round the main streets in a procession on the peacock Vahana (mount). After the procession, a Puja is done to Muruga and Deity reaches its base at the end. On the sixth day the Lord launches a vehement attack upon the mighty giant suran. This victorious day is remembered with joy and gratitude as the Sura Samhara day. The next sanctuary is performed to Lord Muruga followed by the recitation of Kandasasti Kavasm sung Bala Devaroya Swamigal. Hindus observe very strict fast during these six days and it gets terminated with the competition of ritual Samhara ceremony. This, fast is undertaken mostly by women who are barren. Thus, the festival is brought to its conclusion.

73. Ibid p.,310

Karthigai

In the month of Karthigai, special pujas are being performed on the day of Somavaram (every Monday in this month). The special abisekha is being conducted with 108 shanks. During this festival, people used to decorate their houses with lamps continuously for three days.⁷⁴

Karthigai Deepa Urchavam

The lighting of lamps in the month of Karthigai is called Karthigai Deepam. This festival is celebrated in Subramanya Swamy temple, Thirupparankundram and in Tamil Nadu from time immemorial. This, festival is referred to in Tolkappiyam and Sangam literature. It takes place when the full moon day falls in the star of Karthigai in the month of Karthigai. This festival is observed throughout Tamil Nadu in every home and in the temples whether Saivite or Vaishnavite.⁷⁵ The festival has its origin in the Lingodbhava legend of Thiruvannamalai.⁷⁶ It appears to be festival dedicated to Agni the god of fire. There was a dispute between Brahma and Vishnu, the creator and preserver respectively, as to who was supreme. To teach them the truth, Siva appeared before them in the form of a blazing mountain with neither top or bottom. He told them that whosoever returned first after seeing the crown of the Light or its foot would be considered the superior. Brahma took the form of swan and flew up to see the top and Vishnu in the form of boar dug up to see the bottom. Neither of them succeeded. The flag staff or dvajastamba in temple is intended to

74. P.V.Jagadesa Ayyar, *Op.cit.*, p.155.

75. D.Dayalan, *Op.cit.*, p.94

76. S.M.Chari, ***Philosophy and Theistic Mysticism of the Alwars***, *Op.cit.*, p.30.

symbolize this pillar of fire.⁷⁷ It is a festival when beacons are lighted on hill tops praying to god to dispel the darkness of ignorance and misery.⁷⁸ Devotees used to burn heaps of dry leaves, twigs etc., by the name of Chokkappanai (bonfire) in front of temples. The Chokkappanai are symbolic chariots of Asuras burnt by Siva. In Theni Karthigai festival is celebrated in all Saivite and Vaishnavite temples. Karthigai deepa Utsavam is celebrated in temples throughout Tamil Nadu. It falls in the Tamil month of Karthigai on full moon day and is celebrated at temples on the birth state of Muruga. On the morning, the main deity and his consorts are offered special Puja followed by Vedaparayanam. In the evening, a lamp is lit in the sanctum sanctorum and burning lamps are taken to decorate the Prakaras.⁷⁹ Laskhadeepams are illuminated at all the temples in Madurai city. Thiruvannamalai Karthigai deepam and Thiruparankundram Karthigai deepam are very famous in Tamilnadu and Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple, Madurai.

Markali

The Markali peruvila is conducted in the Sri Mariamman temple, Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Kalamega Perumal temple, Thirumokur, Arulmigu Subramaniya Swamy Temple, Thirupparankundram, for 30 days in the month of Markali. In these temples has a separate sanctum for

77. Rajaram, K., ***History of Thirumalai Nayak***, , Madurai, 1982.p.145

78. Rajayyan, K., ***History of Madurai (1736 A.D. – 1801 A.D)***, Madurai University, Madurai, 1974.p.342

79. Ibid.,p.376

goddess. During the month of Markali, women and the unmarried girls gather in the early morning for worshipping Kannan and Aandal. The Vaikunda Ekadhasi commences in the month of Markali, the Sorkka Vassal is opened in these temples.⁸⁰ In the morning, special Abishekam, Alankaram and Aradhana are offered to Goddess. Karupura aarthi is the last item in the ritual. A large number of devotees witness the function. Beautiful, flowers and garlands are offered to god. They, are taken in to procession on Karuda Vahana along all the car streets in Madurai town.

Tiruvadirai

Tiruvadirai festival has been assigned a prominent place in South India from very early time. It is popularly known as Arudra in the Tamil country. It is observed in the month of Margasire (Margalie) (December- January), when the asterism Arudra (orionis) holds away. The occasion specially favourable to propitiate the dancing aspect of Siva by worshipping him. The asterism going by the name Arudra symbolizes the destructive force in the universe. This, festival is observed in all the Saivite temples.⁸¹ The cosmic dancer, Nataraja gives dharsan on this day to his prime devotees Patanjali and Vyagrapada at Thillai. Thus, Tiruvadirai is the festival of Nataraja of the Tamils.⁸² Very early in the morning special ablutions are done to the dancing idol of Nataraja and he is taken in procession. This festival is

80. Shenoy, J.P.L., **Madura – The Temple City**, C.M.V. Press, Madurai, 1937,p.102

81. Vijayaghunathan, T., **The Great Temple of Madurai**, Madurai, 2002.p.45

82. Devaraj, K., **Madurai Nagara Therruppeyarkal – Oor Aiyvu**, Madurai, 1980.p.124

observed in all places and is considered sacred to Siva, yet Chidambaram in South Arcot district is said to be specially important.⁸³

Ennaikkappu Festival

A ten day Ennaikkappu festival is celebrated in the month of Margazhi, for Goddess Meenakshi from Sadhaya Nakshatram to Thiruvathiri Nakshatram. The unmarried girls undertake nonpu (religious observance) for prosperous marriage life. On this day morning the Utsava deity of Goddess Meenakshi is placed on the Vasanta mandapam in Pudumandapam. Shivacharyar performs an act of giving Amman a golden stick for brushing teeth, applying oil for bathing (Ennaikappu- applying oil) and gives beetle leaves. Then Amman is decorated in a grand manner. Parivattam is tied to the statue of Thirumalai Nayakkar and puja is performed to Amman. Then the deity is taken on procession around the Chithirai streets.⁸⁴ For the first 8 days Goddess Meenakshi in Simha Vahana, on the 9th day in Silver Chapparam and on the tenth day in Kanaga Thandi Vahana comes from Pudumandapam around the four Chitirai streets. On the 9th day, during the Arthajama Puja at the second prahara of Sundareswarar shrine, Goddess Meenakshi is placed on an unjal (swing) and the hymns from Thiruvasagam are sung. After each song Deeparadhana is performed. On the tenth day night, at the second prahara of Sundareswarar shrine, a ritual called 'Rattina Ponnunjal' (golden swing) is performed.

83. Ibid., p.135

84. Ibid., p.137

Vaikunta Ekadasi

The famous Vaikunta Ekadasi Day of the Hindus is said to be the eleventh day of the bright fortnight in the month of Margali corresponding to the English month December-January.⁸⁵ This day is celebrated in all Perumal Temples and in Alagarkoil, Madurai.

Arudra Darsanam

It is observed in the month of Margali, corresponding to the English month December –January, when the asterism Arudra (Orionis) holds sway. The occasion is one especially favourable to propitiate the dancing aspect of Siva by worshipping him. This festival is observed in all places considered sacred to Siva.¹¹⁵ It is celebrated in Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Madurai.

Thai

The Pongal is celebrated at their astronomical new year when the sun enters Capricorn about the 11th of January and last 3 days; during which the Hindus employ themselves in mutual visits and compliments something in the same manner as the Europeans do on the first day of the year. The Pongal festival is celebrated on the 1st day of the Month of Thai.⁸⁷ On second day the Cow owners prepare Sweet Pongal and other padayals to the Cow and worship the cow as god because the cow worked for them throughout the year for irrigation. On the third day Kanum Pongal is celebrated every year. Pongal is by the people of Madurai and all over Tamilnadu with the preparation of Pongal in a traditional manner, followed

85. Palaniappan, K., ***The Great Temple of Madurai***, Op.Cit.,,p.223

86. M.P.Bezbaruah, (Ed.), ***Festivals of India***, Op.cit., p.343

87. Natarajan, N., ***Festivals and Cultures of the Tamil***,op.cit.,,p.79

by cultural events. Large number of pilgrims and devotees thronging Sri Madurai Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Vinayagar and Murugan temples became a hub of cultural activities. Domestic tourist and local people enjoyed the festival as they mingled with the foreign tourists and served them sweet pongal. Hanuman Jayanthi, Thai Poosa Pavitra Utsav and Kanu Pongal in January-February are the festivals celebrated in the temples. Thaipoosa Thiruvila is celebrated in all Murugan Temples especially in Subramanya Swamy Koil, Thirupparankundram, Palani and Tiruchendur.⁸⁸

Float Festival

The Hindu festival which goes by the name Thaipusam is observed on the day over which the asterism pusham (cancri) presides, in the Tamil month of Thai (Jan-Feb).⁸⁹ The day generally falls on the full moon day of the month. The planet Brihaspati or Guru (Jupiter) is said to be the presiding deity of asterism 'Pusham' and consequently worship offered to the asterism Pusham is considered to have special merit since Brahaspati symbolizes wisdom and the hindus consider him to be the preceptor of the Gods and one of the most important of the seven planets if not the most important planet. A bath in a sacred river on this day is considered to be very meritorious and people of all sorts flock to the nearest one for the purpose. The natal star of Thirumalai Nayakkar is pusam of the month of Thai and the king to perpetuate its memory arranged the Teppotsavam (Float festival)

88. Kandasamy, V., **Madurai Varalarum Panpadum**, Madurai, 1981, p.68

89. Ibid., p.75

to be celebrated with great pomp. The Teppakulam at the eastern edge of Madurai was initiated by Thirumalai Nayakkar in 1636 AD. As a setting for festivals in which sacred images were floated reservoir has steps flanked by animal and bird balustrades leading down to the water in the middle of each side. A sixteen columned pavilion with a pyramidal tower stands on an island at the centre; it is capped with a kuta roof. Portrait sculptures adorn the four central columns; slabs cut into the shape of arched openings are placed in between smaller but similar pavilions mark the islands four corners.⁹⁰ This Teppakulam covers an area in the south-north 1000 feet and east-west 950 feet with 9.5 lakhs square feet.⁹¹ This tank is commonly known as the Vandiyur Mariamman Theppakulam as there is a famous Mariamman temple on the other side of the tank.⁹² It is stated that a large size Vinayaka or Pillayar was unearthed while the tank was dug. This Pillayar was installed in the southern prakara of the Sundareswarar shrine of the Meenakshi temple and now called as Mukkuruni Pillaiyar. This festival is celebrated till this day with the same pomp and pleasure.⁹³ The float festival is a twelve day festival deciding the Thirthavari (ending day) on Thiruvatirai Nakshatram. On the day of Punarpoosam harvesting festival is celebrated and on the twelfth day (pusam star) the Float Festival is celebrated at Vandiyur Mariamman Theppakkulam. On the first day

90. Vedachalam, V. and Bose, **Thirumalai Mannar Kaiyedu**, Tamilnadu Government Archaeological Research Department, Chennai-113, 1995,p.123

91. Pandithuraithevar, P. (ed.), **Maduraithala Varalaru, Sentamil Prasuram**, Madurai, 1928.P.45

92. Jagadisa Ayyer, P.V., **South Indian Festivals**, Madurai, 1921.P.123

93. Ibid., p.167

morning, after hoisting the flag, the deities of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in Simha Vahana around the second prahara of Sundareswarar shrine and placed in Kulalar Mandapam inside the temple. In the evening Lord Sundareswarar is taken in Karpaga Viruksha Vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Simha Vahana around the four Chithirai streets.⁹⁴ On the second day morning, the deities are taken in separate Thanga Chapparam (golden chapparam) on procession to Kunjan Chettiyar mandapam in Therku vassal. The procession goes through Amman Sannadhi, Chithirai Street, Jadamuni koil street, Manjanakkara Street, South Veli Street and reaches the Kunjan Chettiyar mandapam. There pujas are performed to the deities.⁹⁵ In the evening at about 6 pm the deities start from there, Goddess Meenakshiin Anna(swan) Vahana and Lord Sundareswarar in Bhoota Vahana, come through Therku vassal, South veli street, Manjanakara street, Jadamuni street, Chithirai street, Amman Sannadhi and reach the temple. On the third day morning, the deities are taken in golden chapparams around the four Chithirai Streets and reach Thirukkalyana mandapam inside the temple. In the evening from there, Lord Sundareswarar in kailasa parvatha vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in kamadhenu vahanaare taken around the Chithirai streets and return to the temple.¹²⁵ On the fourth day morning, the deities in Golden chapparams are taken through Chithirai Street, Amman Sannadhi, East Avani Mula Street, Thasiltar Pallivasal Street, East Masistreet, East Vadampoki Street and

94. Natarajan, N., ***Festivals and Cultures of the Tamil***, Tirunelveli, 1984.p.154

95. Ramaswamy, N.S., ***Madurai Meenakshi Symphony in Stone***, Madurai, 1977.p.67

96. Ibid., p.123

reach Nelpettai Attumandhai Pathinettam kottai paratesi mandapam. There pujas are performed to the deities. In the evening the deities return in separate silver throne vahana to the temple through East Masi street, East Marat Street, Ezhukadalstreet and Amman Sannadhi. On the fifth day morning, the deities of Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in golden chapparams to Adhimulam pillai mandapam in Thirukkalyana mandapam and then to Subburaya Achariyar mandapam and pujas are performed.⁹⁷ In the evening Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in separate golden horse vahana go on procession around Chithirai streets and return the temple. On the sixth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken in golden chapparams to Thirukkalyana mandapam inside the temple and pujas are performed there. In the evening, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi go in Rishaba vahanas to Yanai mahal in the south Aadi Street. They are accompanied by the idols Kulachiraiyar, Thirugnana Sambandar and Mangaiyarkarasi. Then the procession goes around the four Masi streets and returns the temple.⁹⁸ On the seventh day morning, the deities are taken in golden Chapparams around the Chithirai Streets and placed in Thirukkalyana mandapam and pujas are performed. In the evening Goddess Meenakshi in Yali vahana and Lord Sundareswarar in Nandhikeswarar vahana are taken around the four Chithirai Streets on procession and return to the temple. On the eighth day morning Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken on golden palanquins to Smt. Azhagammal Chettichi endowment mandapam

97. Vijayaghunathan, T., ***The Great Temple of Madurai***, Madurai, 2002.p.121

98. Ibid., p.127

and reach the Thirukkalyana mandapam. There 'Valai Veesiyaruliya Leela' is performed. Then they are taken on procession around four Chithirai streets and return to Thirukkalyana mandapam. Machahandi vivaham is performed there. In the evening Goddess Meenakshi in golden palanquine and Lord Sundareswarar in golden horse vahana go around the four Chithirai streets and return the temple.⁹⁹ On the ninth day morning Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken on separate Eduppu Ther (a small vahana with handle which is carried on the shoulders of the devotees) around the Chithirai streets and placed on the Chennai Dr. Vijaya Kumar mandapam in Thirukkalyana mandapam. In the evening both Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in a Saptavarnachapparam go around the Chithirai Streets and return the temple.¹⁰⁰ On the tenth day morning the deities are taken in golden palanquins to Muktheeswarar temple in the western side of the vandiyaur Mariamman Theppakulam. The procession goes through Amman Sannadhi, East Masi Street and Kamarajar salai and reaches the Muktheeswarar temple. In the evening, after performing pujas thithavari and 'Theppam mututhalluthal' are held. From there in Rishaba vahanas, the deities reach the temple through Kamarajar salai, East Masi Street and Amman Sannadhi.¹⁰¹ On the eleventh day morning kathiraruttal festival is celebrated. Thai is a month of joy amongst the villagers as paddy is harvested. The God and Goddess are taken in golden palanquins to Ayyanapuram Sri Rangathammalmandapam. Then the procession goes to

99. Natarajan, N., **Festivals and Cultures of the Tamil**, Op.cit., p.123

100. Ibid., p.127

101. Ibid., p.134

Chinthamani village and placed in kathiraruppu mandapam and paddy is harvested as a ritual. In the afternoon at about 2pm after performing pujas, from the village the deities return to the temple.¹⁰² On the twelfth day is the float festival. The Madurai float festival is a spectacular scene to behold. The deities are taken in golden palanquins escorted by elaborately decorated elephants and horses, along with musicians and devotees who sing songs all the way from the main temple to the Mariamman Theppakulam in the early morning. The procession is taken into Mukteswarar temple near the tank and then goes to the Theppakulam. There the deities are placed on a raft. It is decorated with colourful flower, silken bunting and papers. Raft is drawn around the maiyya mandapa two times and goes to maiyya (central) mandapa where it remains until evening. The king Thirumalai Nayak who built the tank is honoured by tying 'Parivattam' (a silk head gear) for his statue which is in the mandapa. Devotees throng in thousands to offer their prayer and the cold winter morning seems to have no effect on their faith.¹⁰³ The most spectacular sight to the Madurai Float Festival is during the evening when the tank water is filled with thousands of floating oil lamps and banks flow with florescent tubes of light. The reflections cast along the lake from the oil lamps looks like the mirror image of the radiant stars in the night sky above. The deities are drawn round the lake again in the night and the celebrations continue into the night and are topped off with an impressive fireworks display to conclude the festivities. At about 10 pm Sri

102. Devakunjari, D., **Madurai Through the Ages** (From the early time to 1801 A.D), Meenakshi Sundareswarar Thirukovil, Madurai, 2004.p.245

103. Ibid., p.345

Meenakshi in Silver throne vahana and Lord Sundareswarar in Golden Horse vahanas are carried back to the temple. The programmes of the twelve days are given below.¹⁰⁴

Masi

This, festival is celebrated in the Tamil month of Masi (February- March) for 30 days in the Mariyamman temple, Theppakulam. The festival commences after the dark night in the month of Thai. During the first day festival, Mariyamman receives special Puja and Alankaram. In the next sequence of the ceremony she is taken in procession on a flower ratham though all the streets in Madurai city. Chitra Peruvela, Therthavari Utsavam, Chitrai Full Moon day festival, Adi Utsavam and Margali Vilaku Puja Utsavam are celebrated only at the Sri Mariyamman temple, Theppakulam.¹⁰⁵

Masi Mandala Utsavam

It is also called Masi Maham festival. This festival starts on Maham star (asterism) in the month of Thai celebrated for 48 days (1 mandalam). Eight flags are hoisted on the first day. 6 days are allotted for Lord Vinayaga, 6 days for Lord Muruga, and 3 days for Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar and 6 days for Chandrasekarar. Panchamoorthy utsava is held for 10 days; Mauna utsavam is celebrated for 8 days; again 3 days for Chandrasekarar, 3 days for Chokkanatha Swami and 3 days for Chandikeswarar are allotted. In those allotted days the concerned deities are taken on procession around the second prahara. The ten days Panchamoorthys utsava (5deities) are as

104. Magazine of Aanmiga Malar, dated 4th May 2015.

105. Ibid

follows.¹⁰⁶ First day morning, Goddess Meenakshi in Simha vahana and Lord Sundareswarar in Karpaga viruksha vahana are taken on procession around the four Chithirai streets. Second day morning, Goddess Meenakshi in Anna vahana and Lord Sundareswarar in Bhootha vahana are taken on procession around four Chithirai streets. Third day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken to Kanya parameswari mandapa in South Avani Mula Street. Evening, Lord Sundareswarar on kailasa parvatha vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Kamadenu vahana starts from the Kanya parameswari mandapa come around the four Chithirai streets and reach the temple. Fourth day morning, from Thirukkalyana mandapam inside the temple Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in Simha vahana are taken on procession around the Chithirai streets and return the temple.¹⁰⁷ Fifth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are carried to Thamu chinnammal mandapam inside the temple. Evening, they are taken on procession in Horse vahana around the Chithirai streets. Sixth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi in Rishabha vahana, go on procession around the Chithirai streets.¹⁰⁸ Seventh day morning, Lord Sundareswarar in Nandhi vahana and Goddess Meenakshi in Yali vahana are carried to Manikka mandapam in South Avani Mula Street. Evening, from there they return to the temple after going on procession around the Chithirai streets. Eighth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess

106. Devakunjari, D., **Madurai Through the Ages** Op.cit., p.341

107. Ibid., p.342

108. Ibid., p.345

Meenakshi in golden palanquins, are carried around the four Chithirai streets and return the temple.¹⁰⁹ Ninth day morning, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are carried in Saptavarna chapparam around the Chithirai streets and reach the temple. Tenth day morning, on the day of Masi maham nakshatram, Lord Sundareswarar and Goddess Meenakshi are taken to Guruswami Sastri mandapam in Yanaikkal. There Thithavari is performed by Lala chtram families. Evening, from Yannaikkal the deities are taken in Rishaba vahana on procession around the four Chithirai streets and reach the temple. On the tenth day flags are lowered down and account is read, which denotes the end of the festival.¹¹⁰ Before the reign of Thirumalai Nayak the celestial marriage of the Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Siva and the car festival were celebrated during this Masi Maham festival. The monarch transferred it to the Chithirai month. After this from 32nd day onwards Mauna Utsava (8 days) and for Chandrasekarar, Chokkanatha Swami and Chandikeswara (for each 3 days), festivals are celebrated.¹¹¹

Maha Sivarathri

Maha Sivarathri or the sacred night of Siva is celebrated by the Hindus throughout India in honour of Siva, the great god Mahadeva and one of the Holy trios the destroyer in function. Maha Sivarathri is observed on the night of the fourteen the day of the dark half in the month of Masi (February-March). It is celebrated in all Siva temples especially in Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Madurai and every Saivite Hindu

109. Jagadisa Ayyer, P.V., **South Indian Festivals**, Op.Cit., p.142

110. Ibid., p.148

111. Ibid., p.154

household. It is the divine worship conducted at night to Lord Siva. The image of Siva is given a special Abhishekam. Varieties of flowers are used in Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarer temple. The celebration of Maha Sivarathri with great splendor and magnanimously offered gifts to his subjects, just as Indra floods the earth with rain at the conjunction of planets. Alberuni has stated that the people worship Mahadeva throughout the night and offer him perfume and flowers.¹¹² Legend says that sivarathri, the night for Siva signifies the great act of sacrifice that Siva did for the preservation of life on earth by swallowing the poison 'Halahala' that emerged from the ocean when it was churned by the devas and asuras to save the devas and hence he is called " Neelakanda". So, it is believed that anyone who fasts and keeps awake all night meditating on the day will secure his blessings.¹¹³ According to ancient scriptures, Siva manifested himself in the form of huge flaming Linga (Jyotir Linga) to shower his grace on his devotees. Another view is that a hunter went into the forest to procure meat for his family by hunting some animal. He wandered in the forest till night but was unable to shoot any animal. Being, chased by a wild animal, he climbed on a vilva tree. During his vigil in the night unknowingly he plucked the leaves of the vilva tree and dropped them down. All these leaves fell on a Sivalinga below. That, night happened to be the Maha sivarathri night.¹¹⁴ Though, his actions were not intentional Siva was placed when the hunter died, his soul reached Sivaloka, the abode of Siva. This festival is especially observed in the Siva

112. Sathyanatha Aiyar, R., ***History of the Nayaks of Madura***, Op.cit., p.123

113. Ibid., p.127

114. Ibid., p.128

temple at Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple, Madurai, Ramesvaram, and other Jyothi Linga shrines. Maha Sivarathri is celebrated with great gusto and gait .In the Siva temples the Sivalinga worshipped in four different ways, during every one of the four yama. They are Vilvam, Thamarai, Nandhiyavattai and Nakalinga malars. But, the neivedhya is different. The sweet pongal and rice, tamarind rice, venpongal, milk rice, coconut rice, sandalare offered to the Lord Siva. But, the offer is different from one and the another. The devotees worship Lord Siva by chanting Om Namasivaya and singing hymns in his praise. The next day the devotees after finishing the morning ablutions offer special worship to Lord Siva by breaking their fast. Then, the festival comes to an end.¹¹⁵

Panguni

The dawn of the first day of Panguni is an auspicious occasion for married woman in which they performed Kartigai nonbu for the health of their husband and longlive of themselves. Panguni Uttiram and new moon days are celebrated in a very good manner in the temples of Madurai.¹¹⁶

Panguni Uthiram

This, festival falls on the Tamil month Panguni (March-April)on Utira natchithiram day and conducted in all Siva and Muruga temples. The moon is then in the asterism uthra. Therefore, the day is considered to be specially favourable for the worship of Siva. The festival is otherwise known as Kalyana Vratha for the reason that the goddess Meenakshi is said to have

115. Ibid., p.134

116. Ibid., p.148

wedded god Sundareswara at Madurai on such a day of a particular year. The Panguni Uthiram day is supposed to mark the end of winter and the beginning of summer.¹¹⁷ It is said that during the region of Thirumalai Nayak, the celestial wedding of Goddess Meenakshi shifted to the month of Chithirai (April- May).¹¹⁸ In the morning Lord Muruga, Valli and Deivayanai are sanctified and Pujas are offered while the chanting of the Rudra Vedha Parayanam is on. Lord Shanmuga is committed to Sandal Alankar. Simultaneously the devotees offer archana to Shanmugar. In the evening, Lord Murugan, Valli and Deivayanai ride on the Mayilvahanam round the temple. The Padrikali Amman temple is very famous for this Panguni Uthiram. The Panguni Utiram day celebrations are also celebrated in the Palani Andavar temple. Palani excels all the other centers. No other celebration can stand comparison to it. The devotees observe a 41 days fast and reach this pilgrim centre on a patha yatra from different of the state donning themselves with dazzling kavadis. Another important feature is the dragging of car on Panguni Uthiram day. During the Brahmotsavam the presiding deity with his consort and other deities are taken in procession through the streets. Each day different Vahanas are used. On the Panguni Uthiram day the deity is carried on a car or called ter.¹¹⁹ Sri Rama Navami The Rama Navami Festival is conducted only in the Perumal temple for ten day in the Tamil month of Panguni. It is observed for two days. The first

117. U.V.Swaminathaiyar, **ChokkanatharUla of Purana Tirumalainathar**, Madurai, 1931, p.5.

118. A.V.Jeyechandran, **Temples as Cultural Centres**, Mysore, 1990, p.224

119. S.S.Janaki, **Siva Temples and Temple Rituals**, Madras, 1988, p.64.

festival starts with special abishekam, alankaram and aradhana. Perumal is cleaned with gingelly oil, tender coconut, water, pannier and kum-kum. Then, he is decorated with cotton clothes and ornaments. It is followed by the special offer of thulsi, pongal and fruits. The karpura arathi is offered to the Perumal. During the ten day festivals, every morning and evening, Perumal receives special abishekam and alankaram. Devotee offers the thulsi, kum-kum and fruits to Kalamega Perumal, Thirumokur and he is taken in procession in different days on different vahanas.¹²⁰.

Through religious festivals, social harmony was brought among all sections of the society, namely, the Brahmanas, the Vellalars, the Nayaks, the Kallars, the Sourastras, the Pallans and others. They have their own mandapams to receive God Vishnu on the full-moon day of the Tamil month of Chithirai, every year during the Chithirai Thiruvila. The festivals of the Nayak period had more cultural values besides religious importance. Their treasury, with stable income enhanced the economy of the people, who could afford to spend money in celebrating festivals. The economic condition of the Nayak age enabled both the ruler and the ruled to spend their money and time, for festivals with interests and happiness. Almost all the festivals of the temples, were arranged on full moon days, so that, the rural folk and the people from far off places made their journey easily, to reach the destination of the festivals in moon light. Chithirai festival, Thai poosam festival, Visakam festival and Karthikai festival were all celebrated only on full-moon days and it was easy and

120. U.V.Swaminathaiyar, **ChokkanatharUla of Purana Tirumalainathar**,

Madurai, 1931, p.57.

convenient for the people to throng and float in the Temples. The festivals of the Nayak age promoted political and social unity. Festivals like Chithirai and Navarathiri festivals were celebrated in all the temple of the Kingdom on the same day.¹²¹ Temple festivals served as custodians of religious traditions and faiths, which were inherited and exchanged to the succeeding generations of the people of the land. Several towns and cities became the radiating centres of Saivism and Vaishnavism and they were very popular among people, at times of festivals, especially, Madurai, Palani, Srivilliputhur, Srirangam and Thirupparankundram. Temples, their activities and festivals, provided employment opportunities to many sections of the society, such as tailors, flower garland makers, sculptors, painters, carpenters, gold smiths, weavers, priests, palanquin lifters, musicians, dancers, securities, gardeners and scavengers etc. Some of them had regular employments and few others had works at specific times of festivals and celebrations. The temples and festivals played a significant and vital role in the social life of the people. When temples served as the citadals of culture, the festivals helped in creating the peaceful entertainments.¹²² As Shiva and Vishnu worship was common during the Nayak age, all festivals were celebrated with great enthusiasm and happiness. Moreover the religious festivals served as a link for the betterment of relationship among the people. Temples retained their importance and gained popularity throughout the Nayak age, because festivals were celebrated with pomp and glory, for achieving the good will of the people.

170. A.R.E., Madras, 428 of 1916.

171. B.N. Banerjee, ***Hindu Culture, Customs and Ceremony***, New Delhi, 1979, p.5.

Thus religious and social customs centred around the festivities have a deep dent on any individual Hindupsyche. Indeed festivals and austerities finally merge into each other excepting that their individual intensities and sensitivities are polarized gloriously!